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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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WALL MARJAMA & BILINSKI
101 SOUTH SALINA STREET
SUITE 400
SYRACUSE, NY 13202

EXAMINER

LUDLOW, JAN M

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

1743

DATE MAILED: 03/22/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/910,399

Applicant(s)

LACOURT ET AL.

Examiner

Jan M. Ludlow

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 1/10/2006.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3,4,6-40 and 61-78 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 15-40 and 61-73 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3,4,6-14 and 74-78 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 20 July 2001 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

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1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on January 10, 2006 has been entered.

2. Claims 1, 3-4, 6-14, 74-78 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

The preamble of claim 1 is not clear because it is not clear what is in combination. The examiner suggests changing "within" to "and" in claim 1, line 2. Claims 3-4, 6-14, 74-78 are unclear because the preambles recite the auxiliary sample handler alone, whereas claim 1 is directed to a combination. In claim 74, "said handler" is unclear because both a primary sample handler and auxiliary sample handler have been recited. In claim 75, "said tip retaining station" is unclear because first and second tip retaining stations have been recited. Claim 77 is unclear because it is directed to a method of use—are aspiration means intended?

1. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

2. The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

3. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
4. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
5. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
6. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.

7. This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

8. Claims 1, 3-4, 6-14, 74-78 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Jacobs *et al* (USP 5,846,492) in view of Corbett and/or Samsoondar.

9. Jacobs *et al* teach a sample-metering device in a clinical analyzer with a sample handling apparatus 20 having a plurality of sample containers 19 containing sample; a sample metering apparatus having a proboscis 46, metering tip 48 supply in ring 20, a metering pump 71; a sample processing apparatus 30 having one or more test elements E. An air tube 100 may be applied to the bottom of the tip to prevent leakage (col. 5, lines 15-25). The primary analyzer cycle method comprising: attaching a tip to

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the proboscis to create the metering assembly; moving the metering assembly to immerse the tip in the sample and aspirate sample from the sample container; moving the metering assembly to a dispense the sample liquid on to the test element; the test element is linearly transferred to an incubator (not shown) within which it is read or detected at a test station 146 (column 8, lines 10-18). Then, Jacobs *et al* teach performing a secondary quality cycle comprising measurements of the sample through-the-tip 48 at the NIR via spectrophotometer 110 at station 82 (column 5, lines 1-30).

Note: the reference teaches the sample liquid can be deposited on the test slide before the through-the-tip analysis (column 8, lines 23-27).

10. Jacobs *et al* do not teach a sample handler for holding sealed tips.

11. Samsoondar (WO 99/47261) teaches a blood analyzer apparatus having a sample handling means, e.g., 94 carrying sealable tips 1,2, in stations 90, sealing means 5, spectrophotometer 14 and smaller tips 4 for insertion into the sealable tips.

Note that stations 90 are structurally capable of carrying either sealed or unsealed tips, and therefore satisfy the limitations to first and second pluralities of tip retaining stations as claimed. Note that the detector is structurally capable of detecting an absent tip, and that the conveyor removes tips from the detector housing.

12. Corbett teaches ring 14 with stations 12 for supporting heat-sealed pipette tips.

Note that stations 90 are structurally capable of carrying either sealed or unsealed tips, and therefore satisfy the limitations to first and second pluralities of tip retaining stations as claimed. Note that the detector is structurally capable of detecting an absent tip, and that the conveyor removes tips from the detector housing.

13. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the claimed invention to have included in the apparatus of Jacobs *et al*, a holder and sealer for the pipette tip of Corbett *et al* in order to allow for efficient transfer of the sample and provide time savings and avoidance of sample contamination (page 3, lines 14-20) or a holder and sealer for the pipette tip of Samsoundar in order to provide known sealing means and conveyance as taught by Samsoundar and/or Corbett in place of air pressure 100 to maintain liquid in a pipette tip for reaction and/or measurement in the tip.

14. Claims 1, 3-4, 6-14, 74-78 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Jacobs *et al* (USP 6,797,518).

15. Jacobs teaches a supply of unsealed tips (col. 4, lines 60-61), e.g., in a tray (col. 5, line 37), aspirator 22, 52, heat sealer (col. 6, lines 41-43), optical detector 68, and tip removing means (col. 3, lines 9-10). Sealed tips can be used as containers to take samples for wet chemistry or dilution (col. 7, lines 44-52). Dry chemistry is also provided.

16. Jacobs fails to explicitly teach a plurality of sealed tip retaining stations.

17. It would have been obvious to provide plural sealed tip retaining stations to use the sealed tips to supply a wet chemistry or dilution station as described by Jacobs in order to use a structure analogous to the sample holder ring 32 of Jacobs. It is the examiner's position that a supply tray for plural unsealed tips inherently includes plural tip retaining stations. It would have been further obvious to form the tray as a ring analogous to the incubator 56 and sample holder 32 of Jacobs. Note that the detector

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is structurally capable of detecting an absent tip, and that the conveyor removes tips from the detector housing.

18. Alternatively, claims 1, 3-4, 6-14, 74-78 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Jacobs *et al* (USP 6,797,518) in view of Samssoondar.

Jacobs teaches a supply of unsealed tips (col. 4, lines 60-61), e.g., in a tray (col. 5, line 37), aspirator 22, 52, heat sealer (col. 6, lines 41-43), optical detector 68, and tip removing means (col. 3, lines 9-10). Sealed tips can be used as containers to take samples for wet chemistry or dilution (col. 7, lines 44-52). Dry chemistry is also provided.

19. Jacobs fails to explicitly teach a plurality of sealed tip retaining stations.

20. Samssoondar teaches a system similar to that of Jacobs. Sealed tips are passed along a conveyor past the detector (Figure 1).

21. It would have been obvious to provide plural sealed tip retaining stations in order to pass the sealed tips by a detector for analysis as taught by Samssoondar. It is the examiner's position that a supply tray for plural unsealed tips inherently includes plural tip retaining stations. It would have been further obvious to form the tray and/or conveyor as rings analogous to the incubator 56 and sample holder 32 of Jacobs. Note that the detector is structurally capable of detecting an absent tip, and that the conveyor removes tips from the detector housing.

22. Applicant's arguments filed January 10, 2006 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

The rejections over Corbett alone and Samsoondar alone are withdrawn in view of the amendment.

Applicant argues that Jacobs '492 in view of Samsoondar and/or Corbett does not teach or suggest an auxiliary sample handler or its operation with a clinical analyzer as now claimed, but does not point to specific language defining over the combination. Note that Jacobs '492 teaches a primary sample handler, a metering mechanism, two analyzers (the dry chemistry slide and the photometer used with the sealed tip), plurality of second tip retaining stations and unsealed tips, as well as an air-sealed tip, as explained above. The only thing lacking from Jacobs '492 (with respect to claim 1) is a plurality of sealed tips and a plurality of stations to put them in. Corbett and Samsoondar are relied upon for teaching placing plural tips in plural holders for passage through a measurement station.

Applicant makes no specific argument with respect to rejections based upon Jacobs '518.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Jan M. Ludlow whose telephone number is (571) 272-1260. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Thursday, 11:30 am - 8:00 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Jill A. Warden can be reached on (571) 272-1267. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).



Jan M. Ludlow
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 1743

Jml
March 20, 2006